



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich at *The West Australian* Events Program Luncheon

The Australia-U.S. Relationship and the President's Partnership Agenda

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It's an honor to be here with you and I want to thank the West Australian for inviting me here to speak and arranging today's event. The people of Perth and Western Australia have been wonderful and I'm grateful for their warmth and hospitality.

My family and I only just arrived in Canberra a few days ago. My kids had never been to Australia before and so their main goals this first week were to meet Angus and Malcolm Young from AC/DC and to make the car stop for every single kangaroo we passed. At least they succeeded at that second goal. We are already being teased by the folks in Canberra for referring to them as "wild kangaroos." You see, apparently they weren't aware that in California we only have domesticated kangaroos.

In any event, we've had an absolutely wonderful reception here. The people have been unfailingly warm and good-natured, and it only increases our desire to travel the lengths and breadth of this great Country. And to meet AC/DC.



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Of course, as the new Ambassador, I'd like to speak today about how I see the Australia-United States relationship, and offer a few words about President Obama's thoughts on our partnership and its meaning for our broader agenda.

Having reviewed some prior speeches, it seems virtually every speech about the Australia-United States relationship usually begins with the ANZUS treaty. This one will be a little different. I want to begin with Facebook.

The day my nomination to be Ambassador was announced ended like most work days for a White House lawyer. I stayed up late responding to the hundreds of work emails I'd received that day. When I finally turned off my computer I still had a couple hundred emails on my personal account to go.

But when I woke up in the morning, my inbox had thousands of new messages. I assumed my computer had a virus. But I didn't. It turned out the vast majority were Facebook friend requests from Australians who'd read about my nomination. I read as many as I could, including one from Victor, from Perth. Victor wrote, "Mr. Bleich, congratulations on your new job, please come out to WA (that's short for West Australia) – see Perth, visit the Kimberley, it's the best part of Australia. Best, Victor."



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So you see it was no accident that my first official travel as Ambassador is to Western Australia. You have my new friend Victor to thank for that.

But there's a core truth in that simple exchange between Victor and me, that tells the deeper story of the Australia-U.S. relationship. There's no question that our countries' shared history in World War II and ANZUS treaty that followed form the cornerstone of the Australia-United States relationship. But those thousands of generous emails I received reveal the brick and mortar that we have built on that stone. America's connection with Australia is about more than just some common policy goals or mutual interests. It is the sum of decades of building trust and understanding. It is the hundreds of thousands of intangible human connections that have forged a deep friendship between our two countries.

It is that friendship, and another friendship that have brought me here. As some of you may know, I have been good friends with Barack Obama for over two decades. I was in Boston with him when he gave his Convention speech that put him on the political map. I was in that first meeting in D.C. when he decided to run against all odds. We were in Iowa together when he was 20 points behind. And we were in Iowa together a few months later when he stunned the skeptics by winning that primary. We were together on election night in Grant Park when he won the Presidency, and I flew from Chicago to D.C. the next day (still a little bleary) to start work on his transition. And for the past 8 months I've had the honor to serve as his Special



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Counsel in the White House, which gave me the chance to work with him, his Cabinet, and all of the White House leadership team. [You know, incidentally, I had a lot more credibility with my kids working in the White House until that couple the other night showed that anyone can go to a State Dinner].

I came to Australia because I can think of no greater way to serve the vision of this President than through the extraordinary partnership we have with you. The President has spoken with me about how his own childhood in Indonesia and Hawaii shaped his worldview and his beliefs about America's role in the world. His insight is that we are all safer when we work to create a world in which we have more friends and fewer enemies. I share his ideas on how best to manage America's leadership position. U.S. leadership grew not from pure force, but from engendering genuine respect – and demonstrating respect for others. The U.S. established that it had power to lead after World War II, but it was acts of engagement from the Marshall Plan, to ANZUS, to the Berlin Airlift, that made it a leader.

Since taking office, President Obama has worked to renew that form of great American leadership. He and those of us who have joined in this effort seek to pursue what he calls a new era of engagement with the world based on mutual interests and mutual respect.



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No relationship better exemplifies that respect than the relationship between our two nations.

And no partnership has a greater chance of extending that engagement through the Asia-Pacific region than ours. So I was deeply humbled when he asked me if I would serve in this role, at this time, as the U.S. Ambassador to Australia.

Across every form of endeavor, from military cooperation to space exploration, from combating climate change to increasing cultural exchange, the United States is committed to Australia.

We simply have no better friend in the world.

This is not an accident, or an odd twist of nature. The Australia-United States bilateral relationship was built by far sighted people over generations. The alliance enjoys solid bipartisan support in both countries, because it is built on the pillars of security, prosperity and most importantly, our shared values, and it is not neglected. We focus on shared goals, and we work in good faith to resolve any differences. We have taken a vast ocean that should separate us, and we have turned it into a zone of peace that binds us.

Our respect for each other and for the rest of the world is a respect built on strength. Our security alliance is critical. This morning I visited the Stirling submarine base. I saw first-hand



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how U.S. and Australian sailors work together with such seamless integration and technological precision that I could only tell them apart by their uniforms, and of course their accents.

From below the sea to on the ground in Afghanistan, our soldiers are fighting side by side as a truly unified force. We stand by one another, and we do not give up on a worthy cause merely because the road is long or difficult. Prime Minister Rudd himself has repeatedly declared that Australia is in Afghanistan "for the long haul," because the world cannot allow that nation to fall back into the hands of Al-Queda.

I want to thank the brave Australians, military and civilian, for their service in Afghanistan, especially the Australian SAS, based here in Perth at Campbell Barracks. We mourn for your lost soldiers just as we do for our own. The President, and I, and the American people are grateful for your efforts and the sacrifices you are making.

Our partnership is also a robust economic partnership. One of the more recent major steps forward in the Australia-United States relationship was the Free Trade Agreement that entered into force in 2005. In its first four years, Australia's overall exports to the United States increased 46 percent while U.S. exports to Australia increased over 56 percent. America buys Australian, invests in Australia, and employs Australians.



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What do I mean by that? The United States is Australia's third largest trading partner. More significantly, we are the largest investor in Australia. As of last year, U.S. investment in Australia stood at roughly 350 billion U.S. dollars. And American companies, large and small, hire Australian workers. These companies currently contribute to the Australia's prosperity by employing over 325,000 Australians.

It goes back to partnership. We don't merely buy from Australia. We invest in Australia's future and its people. Because we believe in Australia.

Tomorrow I will attend the groundbreaking at the massive Gorgon Liquefied Natural Gas facility. The 40 billion dollar Gorgon project represents the single largest U.S. investment in Australia. It is expected to create over 10,000 jobs, bring 28 billion dollars to the local economy, and generate more than 34 billion dollars in revenue for the Australian government. But it does even more than that – it will give Australia a critical way to satisfy its energy needs while producing less carbon. The Gorgon project will be the largest carbon capture and storage energy project in the country, and will produce a cleaner burning natural gas.

This, of course, leads to a third way in which the U.S. and Australia's fates are intertwined: saving the planet. The nations of the world have built their economies on fuel supplies that will run out one day, and that are spoiling our seas and skies. The greatest of our many challenges



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together -- and the one I believe our grandchildren will judge us by -- is developing sustainable and clean energy futures, and combating global climate change. The threat of climate change is real and the United States is committed to meeting our responsibilities to develop a new safe energy future.

I look forward to working with Prime Minister Rudd, who has been a leader in the international climate change debate. Now more than ever, our people, and our planet depend on collaboration between our scientists and engineers to find new ways to increase efficiency standards, create clean energy technologies and cut greenhouse gas emissions.

A fourth way we work together is in saving the planet from others. Our planet is threatened however not just by changes in natural resources, but by man-made threats: the greatest of these is nuclear weapons. Australia has been a leader in global nonproliferation efforts. The United States and Australia have agreed to cooperate and to share intelligence to secure vulnerable nuclear material, help other nations strengthen their own capacity to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction and to bring international outlaws to justice.

Today, we stand together on some of the toughest nonproliferation issues, including Iran and North Korea. And because of the fundamental trust between our two countries, our policy makers can have frank and honest discussions about these matters. The U.S. values Australia's



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views and will continue to seek your candid and insightful counsel on how best to meet these threats.

Our fifth challenge is a regional one. Your Prime Minister has said that Australia is Western by history and Asian by geography. Our President just earlier this month spoke of the great Westernized United States as a Pacific Country and of himself as our first Pacific President. There is no question that the Asia-Pacific's influence is great, and that it is growing. And thus both of our nations have committed to renewed engagement together in the Asia Pacific region.

In the 65 some years since American and Australian forces first fought together to end a World War in the Pacific, we have been committed to ensuring peace and prosperity in the Asia Pacific region. Working with allies such as Australia, the United States has provided the security guarantees and military forces to ensure the region's stability, and investment and markets that helped catalyze the region's extraordinary growth and prosperity.

As a Californian who has lived on the Pacific Ocean for most of the last two decades and worked with companies throughout Asia, I know firsthand how strong our ties are to the Asia Pacific region. Indeed, the Pacific holds the key to the future. With roughly 40 percent of the world's population, and over 54 percent of global GDP centered in the Asia Pacific, America's success and Australia's success are inextricably linked to this vital region.



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This is why both the United States and Australia have championed free trade in the region. To reduce barriers to trade and increase prosperity on both sides of the ocean, the United States has recently committed to engaging in the Trans-Pacific Partnership which will bring 8 nations on both sides of the Pacific into a free trade relationship. Negotiations on that trade agreement will get underway here in Australia early next year.

The importance of the Asia-Pacific is also why the United States has committed to strengthening our regional relationships here. President Obama has personally renewed America's commitments to multilateral institutions across the globe, but especially here. The President came to Singapore earlier this month to attend the APEC summit, where he committed that the United States will be a critical active partner in APEC. Likewise, we advocated the shift to making the G20 the premier forum for international economic cooperation. By partnering with Prime Minister Rudd and others, the G20 we have established is a broader, and properly rebalanced economic forum that rightly includes several Asia Pacific nations. We are committed to the region and will be actively involved in discussions that shape its future.

On that subject, Prime Minister Rudd has also articulated a vision for strengthening and improving the regional architecture for the Asia Pacific community. We applaud efforts to refine and improve Asia-Pacific cooperation, and we look forward to learning more about this concept at a conference in Sydney at the end of this week. As Ambassador, I look forward to working



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with Australia and other countries in the region as we seek to craft an architecture that reflects the political and economic realities of the 21st century.

All of these things will take work, and that is precisely what the President expects of me. I am energized to be his personal representative in this great country, in this great region, at this important time. And while I am fortunate to inherit stewardship of one of America's strongest and most productive alliances, I take none of it for granted. I plan to be an active ambassador who personifies the partnership I have referred to often today.

So on behalf of the President of the United States and the people of the United States, I thank you. Too often this world is marred by regions of conflict and instability. Our nations offer a beacon of hope that great nations can learn from one another, trust in one another, and help one another to create a region of peace that stretches 10,000 miles around the globe. Our alliance has endured because we are committed to it enduring -- no matter which party is in power or which challenge we face. I am committed to this, my new friend Prime Minister Rudd is committed to this, my old friend President Obama is committed to this, and my thousands of new Facebook friends on both sides of the Pacific are committed to this. And so I thank you for the great gift of your friendship, and for all that we will do together in the years ahead.

Thank you.